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ABSTRACT

Presenting a brief overview of the historical development, philosophy, programs, and facilities of the Battle Creek Public Schools' year-round outdoor education center, this document also details four current programs as follows: (1) a 30-week resident outdoor school program for fifth and sixth grade students; (2) a 25-week farm-garden program for third and fourth grade students, wherein, weekly visits are begun during the school year, encouraged on a voluntary basis during the summer and picked up again during the fall; (3) a seven-week pioneer cabin program for third grade students, involving a single full day of pioneer activities in and around an authentic cabin; (4) a four-week barnyard experience program for first graders, designed to coincide with a unit on farm animals taught by classroom teachers during the spring. The philosophy of the outdoor center is described as an attempt to educate children "in" and "for" the out-of-doors via an interdisciplinary approach and direct experience in areas such as plant biology, soil science, horticulture, animal husbandry, geography, and ecology. The outdoor center is described as accommodating about 5,000 students annually on its 140 acre site via a permanent 12-person staff and a full complement of buildings and other facilities designed to enhance the outdoor instructional programs. (JC)

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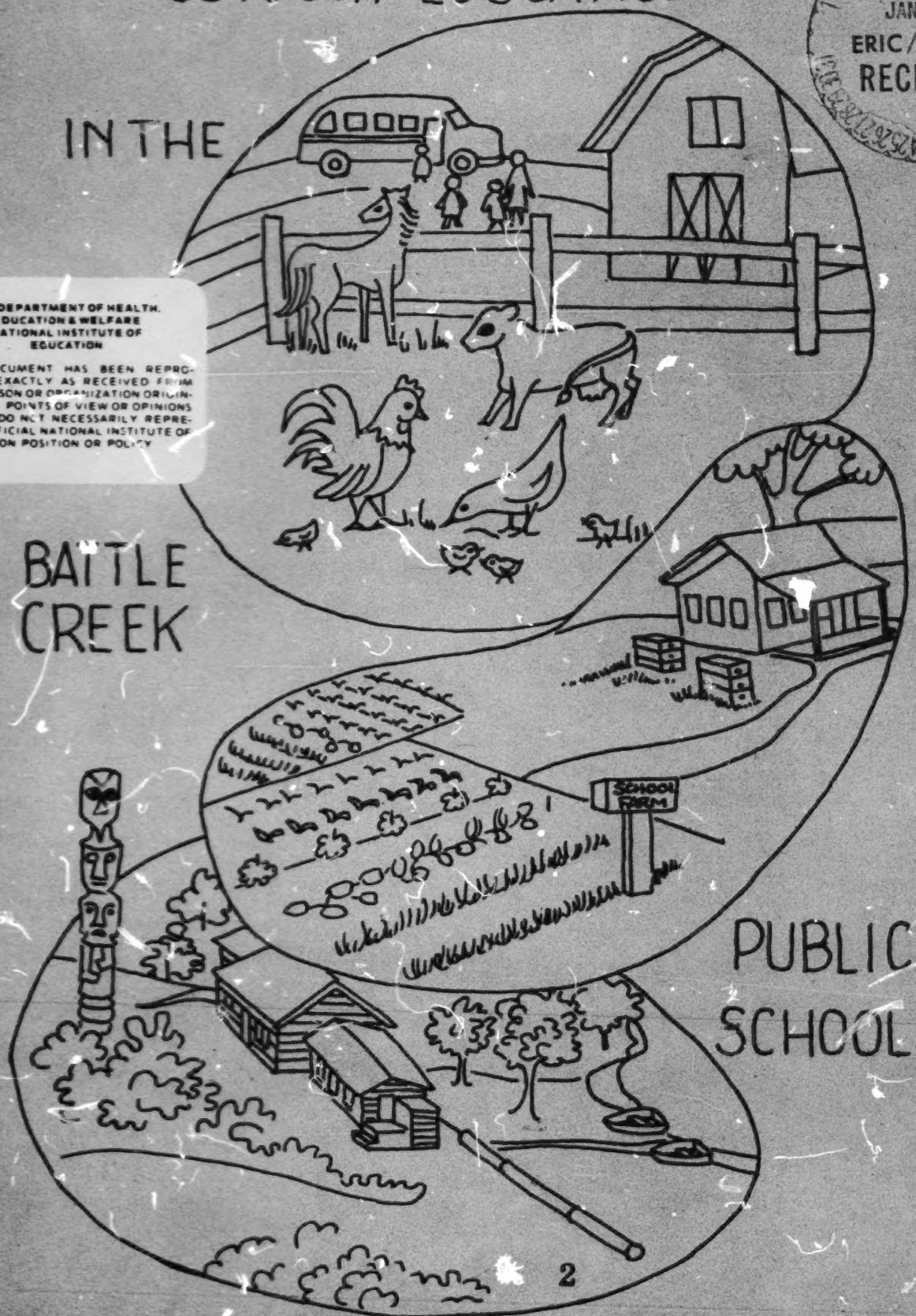

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IN THE BEGINNING ...

The origins of the Battle Creek Public Schools' Outdoor Education Center are closely connected with those of the Kellogg Foundation. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 to promote better health for children, and three camps were soon initiated, in southern Michigan, for that purpose. In 1932 facilities at Pine Lake were used for summer camping for children. In 1933 the Foundation program expanded into winter camping. The Clear Lake Camp site was acquired from the Campfire Girls of Battle Creek. The foundation added to the land, constructed a main lodge similar to Pine Lake's, and began using the camp during the winter months. In 1937 the foundation began to use a third camp, St. Mary's Lake, for winter camping.

Favorable results of the earlier welfare camp efforts along with the growing concern of educators about the whole-child development, prompted the Kellogg Foundation in 1940 to propose another experiment in educational camping. Public school personnel in Michigan were invited to participate in demonstrating the effectiveness of community and school programs. Thus, the first public school camp was initiated on an experimental basis at Clear Lake during the school year 1940-41.

The outdoor education experiment was interrupted by World War II, when the camp at Clear Lake was used by the U. S. Coast Guard for training purposes from 1942 to 1945.

Following the War, the Battle Creek Public Schools and nearby districts expanded their activity in school camping; and, of the three original camps involved, Clear Lake eventually became the setting where all of the school camping activity took place.

In 1947, the Battle Creek Public Schools assumed the major responsibility for operating the Clear Lake Camp. In 1957, the Kellogg Foundation deeded the property and facilities to the Battle Creek Public Schools to continue the now well-established program in outdoor education. At this time the main lodge was renovated, and the two dormitories were constructed.

In 1966, the name Clear Lake Camp was changed to Battle Creek Public Schools Outdoor Education Center. However, although the camp is now a part of a larger outdoor education complex, the camp site and its immediate area are still referred to as Clear Lake Camp. Also, at this time the school camping program became known as the Outdoor School Program.

In 1967, the School Farm and Garden Program was transferred from its Battle Creek location and joined the Outdoor School Program as a second major program operating on the newly expanded Outdoor Education Center site.

At that time, a 100-acre farm and three outdoor classroom laboratories were added to the project. These new facilities, along with the existing barn and farm house, provide the nucleus for the School Farm and Garden Program.

The total program has now moved from a fifth-sixth grade school camping involvement to a comprehensive outdoor education program involving about 4,000 children annually in grades one, three, four, five, and six.

GENERAL STATEMENT

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BATTLE CREEK PROGRAM

The Battle Creek Public Schools own and operate a complete year 'round outdoor education facility in the midst of a rural agricultural community, on a 140 acre site, 13 miles north of the city. Each year, approximately 5,000 boys and girls, grades one through six have some kind of educational experience at the Outdoor Center.

The Outdoor Center operates four major programs: A thirty week resident Outdoor School program for fifth and sixth grade students; a twenty-five week Farm-Garden program for third and fourth grade students; a seven week Pioneer Cabin program for third grade students; and a four week Barnyard Experience program for first grade boys and girls.

The outdoor site has a full complement of buildings and other facilities designed to enhance the outdoor instructional programs. These include winterized bunk-houses; a main lodge which contains the dining hall, classrooms, craft shop, offices, kitchen, instructional materials center, etc.; a director's residence; three outdoor classroom laboratories; a farm house; barn; greenhouse; waterfront; twenty-one summer cabins; 20-acre pine plantation; various trails and interpretive areas. The 140-acre site contains varied natural habitats including rolling grasslands, a mature hardwood forest, a lakeshore, a marsh area and other smaller habitats typical of southern Michigan.

A permanent staff of about 12 people, including teaching, administrative and operating employees, manage the Center.

In addition to providing selected outdoor education experiences for elementary boys and girls, the Center maintains an arrangement with Western University and Michigan State University whereby student teachers from either institution may spend a portion of their student-teaching experience working with children in an outdoor setting. We also provide work experiences for college co-op programs for college undergraduates. Approximately 200 college students gain experience in out door education at the Center each year.

Outdoor education in the Battle Creek Public Schools is based on the premise that all children should be exposed to the out-of-doors in a school setting to develop an initial awareness leading to a reasonable understanding of man's ultimate dependence upon his natural environment.

Outdoor education in Battle Creek is an attempt to educate children "IN and FOR" the out-of-doors.

The "IN" phase means we are using the outdoor portion of the real world as a laboratory to provide complementary experiences for children whose classroom encounter with out-door-related ideas has been developed primarily with written words and pictures. We feel the child will be better able to form concepts in this area of expected learning if he has had the appropriate direct experience with the real outdoor world.

These direct experiences are particularly important in areas like plant biology, soil science, horticulture, animal husbandry, geography , and ecology. Learning in mathematics, art, communications, and other academic areas, as well, can be enhanced and broadened by complementary outdoor activities. The potential complementarity of outdoor experience becomes more apparent when the phrase "outdoor education" is changed to "environmental education" which suggests using the total environment around the child as a learning laboratory.

The "FOR" phase means we use outdoor education to orient children to using the out of doors for its recreational, aesthetic, and economic values.

For example, helping children develop skills in archery, swimming, hiking, casting, hunter safety, firebuilding, rowing, and canoeing contributes to their ability to use their leisure time as adults in a healthy constructive manner.

In addition to more academic and skill-oriented aspects of learning, the outdoor experience, particularly the Outdoor School program, offers children an experience in living together 24 hours a day with each other and their teachers. We feel this experience contributes materially to the social growth of individuals as they experience the responsibilities and interactions in a group living together as a social unit.

The Battle Creek Public Schools' commitment to outdoor education is exemplified by four major programs operating at the Outdoor Education Center at Clear Lake. When considered sequentially, the Barnyard program, the Farm and Garden program, the Pioneer Cabin program, and the Outdoor School program involve children at five grade levels out of seven at the elementary school level.

The unique educational experience offered Battle Creek boys and girls represents only the beginning of educating for "environmental awareness", an awareness that will become increasingly tied to man's ability to provide a quality existence on this planet for this generation and generations to come.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS NOW IN OPERATION

OUTDOOR SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Outdoor School program is a thirty week operation that begins in early October and ends in mid-June. The program is in operation each week except during established vacation periods.

Each week throughout the school year an average of 100 boys and girls participate in this outdoor program and live together in the camp setting. The students arrive on Monday morning and depart on Friday afternoon.

The Outdoor School program is an established part of the elementary curriculum of the Battle Creek Public Schools. The overall program is subdivided into two phases, the fifth grade program and the sixth grade program. The fifth grade program occurs during the winter season (December, January, February), and each fifth grade class is assigned one week during that time block for their participation. The sixth grade program occurs during the fall season (September, October, November), or the spring season (April, May), and each sixth grade class is assigned one week during that time block for their participation. Thus, each child in the Battle Creek school district has two separate experiences in residence at Clear Lake during two different seasons.

The instructional program is semi-structured. Some of the activities are required at a specific grade level; hence, there is a specific grade five program and a grade six program. The required activities are primarily those that have been most popular with students in the past or those that have been developed to be performed in sequence. The two year sequential program also eliminates redundancy by limiting the repetition of the same activities by students in two successive years. However, there are optional activities at each grade level from which additional activities are chosen by each class to round out their program.

About one half of the school year is designated for use by the fifth and sixth grade students in the Battle Creek district. During the remaining portion of the year students in fifth or sixth grade classes in other Michigan school districts come to the Outdoor School. Most of these classes come in the spring season (March, April, May, June); a few classes come during the fall or winter seasons.

The instructional program for out of district students varies depending upon the season in which the students are participating. Since out-of-district students come to the Outdoor School only one time and are able to participate in less than half of the instructional activities offered at the Outdoor School, the program is flexible. It is planned primarily by the students and their teacher and is geared to the season in which they are participating.

While at the Outdoor School the children work together in their classroom groups. There are usually four classes in camp. The classroom teacher participates actively in the program and remains with her class the entire week.

An outdoor school teacher is assigned to work with each classroom group. This teacher visits the class several weeks in advance of their visit to the Outdoor School and provides a complete orientation to the program for both students and their teacher. The same teacher is then responsible for implementing the instructional program with the class during the week of residency at the Outdoor School.

The children sleep in winterized bunkhouses and eat in a modern camp-type dining facility. Instructional planning and activities occur both on the Outdoor Center site and at selected outdoor instructional areas nearby. The students have seven or eight instructional periods during the week in addition to special evening activities that are more recreational in nature as well as assigned daily responsibilities to help keep the Outdoor School functioning with respect to meals and general tidiness of the living area. The entire camp eats together in the lodge dining hall. Balanced meals prepared by experienced cooks are served family style. Using the host system, students are expected to exhibit high standards of etiquette and table manners. Each class does their share of table setting and cleanup in the dining room. Students are assigned seats at the tables to provide more opportunity to meet new friends.

The resident Outdoor School instructional staff is composed of five certified teachers. One of these teachers functions on a full time basis as a general coordinator of activities to keep the mechanics of the program operating smoothly, since facilities and resources are shared by four different classroom groups. Members of the teaching staff are usually younger teachers representing a broad background of academic training as a group. Many have had experiences with children in outdoor programs prior to coming to the Outdoor Education Center. The teachers are supported by a full-time director, responsible for the operation of the entire Center, and teaching assistants who have student teacher or college intern status.

The Battle Creek school district provides and maintains the capital facilities for operating the program. The Board of Education also provides funds for implementing the instructional program including the salaries of the instructional staff. Each Battle Creek student is assessed a fee to cover the cost of food, maintenance, and related expenses of operation.

Students who attend the program from other participating school districts are assessed a separate fee which is proportionate to the total cost of operation.

Classroom groups are encouraged to raise funds in a variety of ways to help reduce the total cost of camp fees.

Funds are available to pay fees for needy children. No child is denied the opportunity to participate in the Outdoor School program due to a lack of funds.

SCHOOL FARM AND GARDEN PROGRAM

The school Farm and Garden Program is a 25-week operation that begins in late April and ends in early October. All third graders in Battle Creek begin regular weekly visits as classroom groups to the School Farm during the school day and continue over the summer on a volunteer basis. When school begins in September, the program is again incorporated into the school day on a weekly basis with the returning fourth graders participating until the close of the farm season in October.

The primary thrust of this program is to give third and fourth grade students a number of direct experiences with the land, related to food production, soil science, horticultural techniques, plant biology, general soil conservation and wildlife habitat improvement practices, and the general flow of food from the land to the consumer in the city. The larger understanding involved is man's ultimate dependence upon the land, even though he may not be directly involved with land use or food production. To gain the insights essential to developing a reasonable understanding of man's relationship to the land, children need a number of experiences in an outdoor setting where they have the opportunity to see things first hand.

Classroom students begin receiving some orientation to the School Farm program when one of the members of the farm teaching staff visits their classroom and introduces them to the kinds of activities they will be involved in during the spring, summer, and fall farm seasons. At about the same time, a set of instructional materials arrives from the Farm that will enable the youngsters to set up a flower garden in their classroom to later be transplanted into their school garden at the Farm. This "mini-garden" provides basic experiences related to soil composition, seed germination, early plant growth requirements and general plant culture. In addition, each classroom carries out other botanical experiments related to such factors as seed germination and the effects of light on plants.

During the first week of the Farm Program youngsters are usually involved in conservation plantings to create forest plots, wildlife food and cover plots, and windbreaks. In addition, numerous landscape plantings, orchard maintenance, mulching, weeding, tree fertilization, and other farm site improvement projects are undertaken.

Following the week of conservation activities, the School Gardens are established; and the spring planting begins. Each elementary school is assigned a half acre of ground, and children plant approximately 30-40 different kinds of vegetable crops. In addition to individual school gardens, community gardens are established for a variety of other field crops. In all, about 18 acres are hand cultivated by the students.

Although most of the crops are grown from seeds, five or six vegetable types are started in flats in the greenhouse and students transplant these plants into their gardens in the late spring.

The children work on the Farm in classroom groups with their teachers, under the guidance of the Farm teaching staff. The classroom group work continues until the end of school in June. During the summer, all of the children who wish to participate from any particular school have a scheduled day at the Farm each week throughout the summer. The summer season focuses on cultivating, harvesting early crops and planting late-maturing crops.

In the fall, the boys and girls come back as fourth graders to carry out the harvest activities. All produce is given to the students participating in the program. Many special activities on the Farm are developed from the apairy, herb garden, weather station, dwarf fruit orchard, vineyard, berry patch, greenhouse, popcorn patch, and landscape nursery.

The Farm site is complemented by three laboratory type classrooms, a greenhouse, garden tool and crop storage building and farm equipment building.

PIONEER CABIN PROGRAM

The Pioneer Cabin program is a seven week operation that begins in early September and ends in late October. The program is designed to complement the third grade social studies program which, at the beginning of the school year, focuses on the study of early Battle Creek history.

The focal point of this program is an original log cabin over 100 years old that has been reconstructed on an appropriate site at the Outdoor Education Center. The cabin is a one and one-half story, hand hewn structure, measuring 18 x 24 feet on the floor. It has been furnished with a variety of pioneer artifacts including table, chairs, bed, spinning wheel, candle mold, iron pots, stone fireplace, rifle, butter churn, trunk, eating utensils, and oil lamps.

The area around the cabin is surrounded by an original split rail fence of northern cedar. Within this enclosure activity areas have been created that are used to illustrate several aspects of pioneer life such as candlemaking, wood working, clothes washing, and dyeing.

Future plans call for the addition of a smoke house and Michigan cellar to show food preservation techniques.

The concept in ressurrecting a pioneer cabin at Clear Lake is to give third grade children more direct experiences with the life style of their forebearers, beginning with the activities of the earliest settlers in Michigan. The pioneer cabin and associated artifacts are organized to show the life style of the pioneers who settled on a new land under conditions demanding much self-sufficiency. The methods and materials used to provide themselves with food, clothing, and shelter show clearly man's ultimate dependence upon his natural resources for his survival.

Each third grade class is scheduled to spend a full school day on the pioneer site. The teacher and her class arrive at the site by 9 A.M. where they are met by two staff teachers from the Outdoor Education Center who are responsible for organizing their day of pioneer life. After an initial orientation to acquaint the students with the facility, the students work independently throughout the day experiencing a variety of activities. The prime role of the teachers is organizing the various activities and helping the students to understand the significance of the common tasks performed by the early

settlers to ensure their survival. During a typical day each student might have first hand experiences in fire building, wood working, milking goats, making candles, baking bread, making butter, and washing clothes as well as becoming acquainted with the purpose and function of numerous artifacts.

Through the kind of laboratory learning offered at the pioneer cabin site and ensuing discussion relating the pioneer life style to contemparary society it is hoped that students will gain some insights on modern day man's needs and what he has done to satisfy them.

BARNYARD EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

The Barnyard Experience program at the Outdoor Center is a four-week program designed to support the "Farm Animals and Animal Babies" units usually developed by first grade classroom teachers in the spring of the year.

The primary thrust of the Barnyard program is twofold; one objective is to give children the opportunity to gain some perceptual learnings through direct experience with the smells, sounds, movements, shapes, sizes, colors, and general behavior of the animals under consideration. A second objective would be to create student and teacher interest in finding out more about animal behavior and the general relationship between man and domestic animals.

Approximately 800 first grade boys and girls and their teachers are brought to the Farm Barnyard between early May and the close of school. There they will take a farm orientation ride on a hay wagon, visit a barn to see the hayloft, grainery, animals in the stalls and corrals, see animals in the pasture, and visit an operating windmill.

Children will have an opportunity to see, touch and feed pigs, goats, sheep, lambs, chickens, ducks, geese, a pony, a turkey, rabbits, calves, and a donkey. Chicken roosts and nests, touching and smelling baled straw and hay, windmill water trough, salt block and electric fence stories are among the many experiences developed for the children during their visit.

The Barnyard experience is an extension of the Farm and Garden program and operates simultaneously and in close physical proximity to the third and fourth grade gardens.

FUTURE PLANS FOR PROGRAM EXPANSION

MICHIGAN RURAL HISTORY PROGRAM

An additional major facility is being planned at the Outdoor Center to support a program designed to familarize children with their Michigan Heritage.

The facility will be a small rustic museum-type building that will display a large collection of artifacts that were related primarily to agricultural and homemaking practices from about 1850 to 1900. Both indoor and outdoor displays will be featured. This facility in addition to the Pioneer Log Cabin, in combination with certain nearby resources, like the "old stagecoach trace" from Battle Creek to Hastings and the steam-operated sawmill in Dowling, should provide elementary boys and girls with a good deal of insight into the problems and practices of their forebearers in helping make the state what it is today.

In summary. the Outdoor Education Center, owned and operated by the Battle Creek Public Schools, functions primarily to give boys and girls living in an urban setting some insights into their outdoor heritage that lies beyond the city environment so they may, in future years, promote and participate in the wise exploitation and use of man's most basic resource.